

July 8, 2007

RECEIVED

Chuck Oliver, District Ranger  
Darby Ranger District  
P.O. Box 388  
Darby, MT 59829

JUL 16 2007

Ravalli County Commissioners

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Dear Mr. Oliver:

This letter is in response to the County's recent proposal to reopen the Lost Horse rock quarry. I am an avid horseback trail rider. I frequent the Lost Horse Canyon area for its spectacular scenery and trails.

I believe that a rock quarry in this vicinity will produce dangerous traffic conditions for all visitors to this area, but especially for those persons, like me, who are pulling horse trailers and using livestock. The road is narrow and can be precarious when even small vehicles approach one another. And then there's the actual decomposition of the road base from heavy equipment activity.

The idea of reopening this rock quarry seems highly inconsistent with current and traditional uses. This quarry has been inactive for years, and this area has since been promoted as a recreation area. It has changed dramatically from any type of industrial site. It's grown into a destination site for recreationists, providing a wide range of outdoor activities to enjoy, and is now in close proximity to residential properties lining the access road.

I personally ride my horse in this pristine wilderness area and observe tourist-led horseback rides through the beautiful countryside. Campers frequent the area, as well as hikers and climbers, and clubs. I marvel at the animals I've observed in this habitat—moose, deer, elk, owls, hawks, pheasant, chipmunks, squirrels. Do you think they'll stay in the area once a quarry is in operation? Do you think the area will be safe for horseback riders with heavy construction equipment, blasting, truck traffic, etc. if this operation reopens? Will the County be held responsible for injuries incurred because of a novice rider or a young, unseasoned horse which becomes startled and results in an injury incident? Will tourists come back to this pristine area once they see and hear the destruction in the area?


I understand this old/abandoned and once remote quarry was once viable, but the area has since changed to the new, vibrant and actively populated area it is now. It is no longer a place for commercial/industrial enterprise of the type proposed.

I cannot believe our County officials are even considering this proposal—to save a few \$ that they now have to spend at other regulated quarries throughout the Bitterroot Valley (which are also an eyesore and which I've noticed are growing in number each year.) I believe those quarries (many of which are NOT located in a pristine and/or wildlife area) can more than supply whatever road gravel is needed for Ravalli County.

I think the tourist/recreationists drawn to this canyon area more than out way the ugliness you wish to bring on the County residents that frequent this serene canyon.

This letter was sent to you to voice my opinion and I hope that it will make a difference in your decision to pursue this rock quarry operation.

Respectfully submitted,

  
Colleen Long  
237 Tin Cup Road  
Darby, MT 59829

✓ cc: Glenda Wiles, AA  
Ravalli County Commissioners Office